



messing about in BOATS

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Greetings from Miami, where a bigger contrast to our last four months on the Atlantic Ocean cannot be imagined.

As Jason and I pedaled away from the Algarve coastal town of Lagos on 13th October, I remember a magical brilliance in the cool morning sunrise, a small crowd of waving friends and disbelieving strangers along the quay; fishermen hoisting their catches off to market; a knot as large as a monkey fist in my belly.

The golden sandstone cliffs gradually sank under a choppy, blue horizon and the knot unraveled. Our spirits soared as we realised that three years of planning was over. No more talking, pleading and borrowing. Our entire world was now enclosed in a small wooden boat called *Moksha* and the adventure, the first pedal powered voyage from Europe to the USA, became real. But it was also our first time at sea and 4,500 nautical miles of pitiless ocean lay ahead. The knot came back, double thickness.

The human mind seems infinitely adaptable. Within a week we had survived our first heavy sea and had settled comfortably into a routine that changed little in four months. During daylight we chose two hour pedaling shifts, switching to a four hour rotation at night, and this continued non-stop for 500nm until we made landfall in Madeira (Day 15). We hastily fixed a cracked skeg and our salt-ridden video camera, and squeezed in school visits before striking out southwest once again bound for the Northeast Trades.

4,000nm is an unimaginable distance when one is traveling at 2 knots, so we learned to look forward to closer, more



Pedal for the Planet

The First Human Powered Round-the-World Expedition

By Steve Smith
(Our life is frittered away by detail... Simplify, simplify. - Thoreau)

tangible goals. Until Day 111, we never pedaled towards Florida. We pedaled towards porridge at 8am; towards a cup of tea at 10.30, towards the next break.

By Day 55 we had reached the mid-Atlantic Ridge and were suffering badly from salt sores, chronic tiredness and the mental stresses which build under

confinement made worse by constant motion. Imagine a funfair ride which becomes irritating and ultimately nightmarish as it refuses to stop to let you off. In order to maintain a positive outlook we opted to avoid depressing fatigues by both sleeping for 8-10 hours every ten days, leaving the boat to drift. The happy expectation of this treat was only underlined for the one whose turn it was to crawl into the rear cabin to sleep among bags full of rotting garbage, the stench of which surpassed even our own odor after the second month at sea. (Note: Jason & Steve carried anything not biodegradable with them.)

In other respects we approached the mental challenge very differently. Jason chose to confine and focus himself on daily activities, as if he were on land. However, in contrast to the distractions and influences of normal life, he found that our simple routine and isolation released time to thoroughly concentrate on doing each project well, whether it was cooking, writing, making repairs to just thinking. "He did each single thing as if he did nothing else" (Dickens), discovering a near-meditative and altogether happier condition than my own.

I too benefited from the "wilderness experience", but as navigator my prime concern was always daily progress towards land, however distant. Being focused on the present may alleviate anxiety, but one cannot just "be" for too long in a wooden box with dwindling food whilst floating on water three miles deep. My moods were therefore closely related to the weather. Sometimes we would be unable to pedal for days on end because of strong westerlies,